

**U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Highways, Transit and Pipelines
Hearing on Transit and Over-the-Road Bus Security**

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Introduction

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, my name is Peter J. Pantuso and I serve as the President and CEO of the American Bus Association.

First of all, Mr. Chairman please accept my “thanks” and that of the industry I represent for this hearing on transit and over-the-road bus security. The American Bus Association and its members take seriously the duty to provide bus passengers with safe and efficient transportation options at reasonable costs. And for the ABA, “safe” also means, “secure”. Your leadership has allowed ABA members to continue to hope that the security of the bus industry will be maintained and strengthened. The ABA looks forward to continuing to work with you to strengthen the security of the nation’s private bus transportation system.

American Bus Association

The ABA is the trade association representing the private over-the-road bus industry. While the name “American Bus Association” may connote only transportation, indeed our reach is broader. ABA serves as the voice for almost 1,000 bus and tour operators but it represents 2800 travel members as well. These travel destinations include such icons as the Empire State Building in New York City; Radio City Music Hall; the Smithsonian Institution; other landmarks; the Art Institute of Chicago; and through the National Park Service the Washington Monument. ABA also represents Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs), bus manufacturers and other companies that service the industry.

The ABA has 3800 members engaged in all manner of transportation, travel and tour services. In addition to the services noted above, our members are engaged in commuter services, charter and tour operations, sightseeing and airport shuttle services throughout the nation. The private bus industry transports approximately 774 million passengers each year. That total that exceeds the number of passengers carried by the nation’s airlines and rail service combined, secondly to the nation’s transit systems. In fact, the bus industry carries more people in two weeks than Amtrak carries in a year. Moreover, ABA members link some 5000 destinations in the United States as opposed to the airlines five hundred destinations and Amtrak’s modest number of destinations. Fixed route, intercity buses serve sixteen Canadian and Mexican border crossings with 359 daily schedules and at least as many charter and tour buses cross these borders every day.

The difference between the bus industry on the one hand and the airlines and Amtrak on the other hand is that ABA bus operators are largely, in big cities and rural areas, small businessmen and women -- small business people who operate with little or no subsidy from the federal government to support their day-to-day operations. And while the federal government has, for several years, engaged in a massive effort to protect

the airlines and other mass transportation systems from further attacks, funds to aid the private bus industry in the same effort have been, with one important exception, which I will explain shortly, sorely lacking.

Bus Security

ABA and its members have been assessing the security needs of the bus industry over the last five years. ABA bus operators have told us what they need to aid them in the protection of the industry. First, training is the highest priority. ABA members want to train their personnel, drivers, dispatchers, and mechanics, in the techniques of threat assessment, threat recognition and crisis management. Second, equipment is needed for the operators. Examples of such equipment are cell phones and other communications systems between drivers and “home base” and emergency first responders; driver shields; cameras for bus facilities, staging areas and garages, equipment necessary to provide security “wandering” of bus passengers as well as funds to protect significant bus passenger terminals at destinations such as, the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City, bus terminals in Las Vegas, Nevada, Boston, Massachusetts, and Chicago, Illinois. Third, information systems that allows bus operators “real time” information on the status and location of their motorcoaches.

The need for bus security funds extends beyond the requirements of intercity scheduled operators. The spring weather brings to D.C. thousands of chartered motorcoaches bearing students and senior citizens. These tourists blanket the halls of Congress, the Spy Museum and the buildings that make up the Smithsonian Institution. The motorcoaches that bring the tourists are ubiquitous on the streets around the Capitol and the Capitol city. They and the people they carry must be protected, not only in the District of Columbia but wherever charter buses gather in significant numbers.

To do so effectively these charter and tour operators must be allowed to compete for the broadest possible array of security funds to train their personnel, build their communications, secure their infrastructure and equipment and have the ability to provide real time information about their equipment on a moment’s notice. In addition, allowing charter and tour bus operators to compete for security grants will help increase the security of bus facilities in the nation’s tourist destinations.

Need for Federal Funds

While our list of programs and funds for bus security is on balance fairly small, the need for such federal funds is large. This is because the bus industry for all of its reach and its passenger base receives little public money and as I have stated before, the industry is one of small businessmen and women. Indeed, the average ABA member has eight to ten motorcoaches.

Over the last several years Congress has given the airlines significant funds to increase airline security. One recent analysis advances the theory that the amount of money for airline security amounts to nine dollars per airline passenger trip. That being so, a comparable ratio for the amount of funds provided for bus security is less than one cent per bus passenger trip. Obviously, no one can dispute the need for airline security. However, the private bus industry can and does dispute any idea that such a disparity between transportation modes is justified or sufficient. Moreover, interest in a comprehensive plan for rail security (both Amtrak and transit) increased after the Madrid bombing in 2004. However, a comprehensive look at bus security is still unfinished business.

Currently, the only two federal programs for which private bus operators are eligible to compete are the so-called Section 5311(f) rural transportation fund which provides States with funds to subsidize rural intercity bus transportation and the ADA wheelchair accessibility fund which provides a small amount of money to allow only 10 percent of private bus operators to defray the \$40,000 cost of placing a wheelchair lift on a motorcoach.

Congressional Efforts

I mention the \$40,000 figure because it points up the necessity for federal security funds. The cost of security training and equipment is more expensive than that for wheelchair lifts. Moreover, security training requires periodic refresher courses. Of course, this committee knows the costs of security. Over the past several years this Committee has worked with the ABA in several attempts to provide the private bus industry with funds for security. In 2002 the Committee reported, and the House approved, HR 3429. The bill provided \$99 million in grants to help bus operators improve security. Security improvements that were, and are, necessary in light of the fact that, in the words of Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Don Young: “during the past 80 years, 50% of international terrorist attacks have occurred on buses or in bus stations.” In 2004 this Committee reported HR 5082, which provided funds for bus security in training, equipment and maintaining the security of bus personnel and facilities.

Each of these bills provided funds through the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Transportation to private bus operators for the purposes detailed above. These funds would be distributed pursuant to applications from bus operators. The applications would detail the amount requested, the purposes for the grant and the operational “footprint” of the bus operator and the grantees would be chosen by a competitive process that rated the applicants against one another. Each of these bills offered bus operators the chance to maximize the protection of their buses, personnel, facilities and passengers.

Appropriations Process

While the full Congress has yet to pass a comprehensive bus security bill the efforts just detailed are important because they have shown the way for the nation to improve bus security. The American Bus Association has also worked with the appropriations committees in Congress to secure bus security funds. Since fiscal year 2002 the appropriations committees have approved a total of \$55 million for bus security grants. The process by which these funds are awarded has been simple and effective. The Department of Homeland Security (prior to which the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was in charge) places a notice in the Federal Register that grant monies are available. Eligible bus operators then apply and the DHS determines which operators receive how much of the funds for the year. At this time, ABA and its members are awaiting word from DHS concerning the availability of \$10 million appropriated for fiscal year 2006. ABA and its members applaud the House and Senate Appropriations Committees for their approval of these funds.

The last two completed appropriations cycles demonstrate the need for expanded bus security funding. In fiscal years 2004 and 2005, Congress appropriated \$10 million per year for intercity bus security. In those two years, DHS awarded \$19.6 million in bus security funding to only 77 entities out of 154 eligible applicants who applied for a total of \$106.7 million.

Finally, the ABA continues to believe that it is in the best interest of the nation for Congress to cease being reactive in the case of security. For ABA and its members this means that Congress should look at the modes of transportation individually, assess their security needs, regulatory structure and industries and establish security funding on that basis.

The Use of Security Funds

The private bus industry can report that the money appropriated for bus security is being put to good use. A list of the bus operators who were granted funds in FY 2004 and the reasons for their grants is attached to my testimony. In prior years, ABA used grant money to provide security-training materials and an instructional CD to bus operators. ABA began a "train the trainers" program held in cities around the country that was well attended and rated as "excellent" or "very good" by 90% of the program's evaluations.

Particular companies have likewise developed successful initiatives with their grant funds. Greyhound Lines used its grants (and its own money) to increase passenger "wandering" in its larger terminals. Greyhound also developed, and installed on all of its scheduled bus fleet, an on-board communications and GPS system and a driver lateral shield with which Greyhound drivers can fend off attacks. Wisconsin Coach Lines used its grant to purchase screening equipment; e.g., metal detectors and handheld wandering

devices. Ready Bus Lines in Minnesota used its grant money to secure its garage, as did Concord Lines in New Hampshire.

C&J Trailways, also in New Hampshire, instituted a program in which all tickets were sold in the passenger's name subject to positive identification. This required however, the addition of staff at company-operated terminals during peak traffic periods. Northwestern Stage Lines in Spokane, Washington used grant funds to train its staff and create an emergency plan for the company. Academy Express in New Jersey and Adirondack Lines in New York began implementing a Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) system, as have several other carriers. The use of GPS allowed Peter Pan Bus Lines to find a stolen bus in very short order. In addition, lighting, fencing and cameras placed in the parking areas of its Providence, Rhode Island station has curtailed auto thefts in the area. Finally, installation of surveillance cameras at its Springfield, Massachusetts's terminal, allowed law enforcement officials to end a pipe bomb scare in the terminal.

Obviously, there is much more to be done. The figures speak for themselves. One half of those companies that applied for security funds in 2004 did not receive any funding. As a consequence, cameras, enhanced communications, increased passenger, personnel and driver security efforts did not take place at half the places such initiatives are needed. We can and must do more.

When I said that the Congressional efforts showed the "way to go" on this issue, it is literally true. ABA is sure that the appropriations committees and the TSA and DHS used the bus security bills considered by this Committee as templates for how the appropriated funds should be distributed and for what purposes. In a very real sense, the bus industry's efforts to improve security owe much to the Committee and its members.

Moreover, the security efforts of ABA members would not have been possible without federal funds. As bus operators are largely small business companies money for efforts to improve security prior to 9/11 were largely non-existent. After 9/11 and before the availability of federal security funds, few bus operators were able to fund such efforts without incurring significantly increased costs. I have noted the efforts of C&J Trailways and Peter Pan Bus Lines in this regard. I could just as easily have mentioned Greyhound Lines, Academy or Jefferson Lines, all of whom have seen their security costs mushroom.

Even with the ABA training program in place the security costs to the bus industry continue to increase. For example, C&J Trailways has expended over one hundred hours each year in employee training related to security. The collective cost for the provision of these services and training exceeds \$90,000 on an annualized basis. Prior to 9/11 Greyhound estimates that it was spending approximately five million dollars annually on security, after 9/11 its costs jumped to \$10 million dollars annually, even with the grants awarded by DHS Greyhound expects its security costs to continue to grow.

The Future

The security efforts and the costs listed above is testimony to the ongoing need for transportation security funding for the private bus industry. More American Bus Association members speak now of the need for GPS systems, with “real time” information about their buses and personnel. They now discuss the need to update the training materials and the need for more “train the trainer” sessions, in more locations. And they speak of the need for more security equipment in terminals and garages and on buses. They also emphasize the need to expand passenger, baggage, and package express screening and to employ new screening technologies.

The need for more funds for bus security also seems obvious given the huge sums Congress has approved for airline security. It appears that as we seek to “harden” transportation facilities, those who seek to do the United States harm will turn to less secure areas and facilities as targets. The war we face against terrorism will not be won quickly” As that is the case, we all must continue to expand and update the security of our transportation infrastructure and protect those 774 million passengers who ride our buses.

Specifically, ABA supports legislation along the lines of HR 5082, which authorized \$50 million per year for three years for intercity bus security. In FY04 and 05, eligible intercity bus applications to DHS averaged more than \$50 million per year with less than \$10 million per year available to meet those needs. New authorizing legislation along the lines of HR 5082 could lead to higher and more appropriate intercity bus security appropriation in FY07 and beyond.

Conclusion

The American Bus Association looks forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman and the Committee to ensure that our transportation system, which is second to none in safety, reliability and low cost, retains that ranking when “security” is added to that list of duties.

Thank you for your time and I will be happy to answer any questions.